THE

TRUE ALARM!

AN

ESSAY:

SHEWING THE

PERNICIOUS INFLUENCE

OF

HOUSES OF INDUSTRY,

ON THE

POLITICAL INTERESTS OF THIS COUNTRY.

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M.DCC.LXXXVII.

TO HIS GRACE

The DUKE *of* NORFOLK.

MY LORD,

I HAVE ever been an Admirer of your Grace's political Character. It is an Acknowledgment which the Publick at large owe you, that, in every great Queſtion in which the Intereſts of the People were concerned, you were ever their zealous and affectionate Tribune. The following Pages are dedicated to your Grace from a firm Conviction, that, if they ſuggeſt to you, though now a Patrician, a ſingle Hint by which you can benefit the loweſt of your Fellow-Subjects, you will not fail to improve it.

The AUTHOR.

Great Yarmouth, November 28, 1787.

THE

TRUE ALARM!

THERE are certain enormities in ſocial life of ſo flagrant a nature, that every one is capable of perceiving their exiſtence, and of blazoning forth their obviouſly pernicious tendency. Thus the deſolations of war, or the groſs infringement of the Conſtitution by the hands of arbitrary power, excite in the breaſt of every man, who makes the leaſt pretenſion to patriotiſm, the moſt awful apprehenſions, and inſtantly arm his tongue with the ſharp ſpears and arrows of bitter invectives againſt thoſe who promote the one, or are guilty of the other. But there are evils in a community, which, as they are of a ſmaller magnitude, do not ſtrike ſo readily the attention of ſuperficial obſervers, although their effects, if not timely prevented, will ulti-

mately be productive of the moſt baneful conſequences, and generate miſchiefs, which, in the end, will be abſolutely remedileſs. For it is indeed with political bodies, as with human bodies, a ſtroke of the palſy, or a raging fever fills each intereſted friend with terror for the perſon thus affected, whilſt what is denominated a mere cold, or ſlight indiſpoſition, though in fact the ſure prognoſtick of an approaching conſumption, is regarded by even thoſe, who moſt love the perſons in whom theſe appearances are viſible, with the moſt perfect indifference. Under the ſanction then of the truth of theſe remarks, I would now wiſh to call the attenion of the publick to an evil of the latter ſpecies which I have mentioned; of which, though now like Elijah's cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, it may, without affecting any thing like prophetic powers be foretold, that it will certainly, in the courſe of time, deluge theſe kingdoms with the waters of deſtruction. The evil I refer to is the *eſtabliſhment of Houſes of Induſtry*.

If now-a-days we travel into any of the more cultivated parts of this iſland, our eyes are not greeted, with ſuperb ſeats, the retreats of the opulent; with magnificent palaces, the reſidences of nobility; no! each eminence is now made conſpicuous by vaſt compilations of buildings for the reception and the impriſonment of the poor. From every the moſt diſtant part of a hundred, theſe mementos of the miſery of confinement and of poverty aſſail our attention. The humble cot, the mud-formed wall, are now no objects of rural deſcription. In the wapentake's immenſe ſtructures are now contained all thoſe, who, uncontrouled, but by their own wants, once dwelt in thoſe lowly habitations, affording to the fancy of the ingenuous, many a rich feaſt of grateful contemplation. Indeed, there is not now-a-days a poor man to ſay, "God bleſs you," as you go.

But theſe are matters, whoſe tendency, though deſcribed by the ableſt pen, is only to make the man of benevolence anxious reſpecting theſe eſtabliſhments. There

are circumſtances attending the founding of theſe houſes of induſtry, the moſt curſory depicting of which, will be ſufficient to excite an alarm in the country, and to inſpire every man capable of thought and feeling, with a due degree of zeal to endeavour ſtopping that pernicious rage, that, but too much threatens to become univerſal throughout the various provinces of theſe kingdoms.

It is well-known that even the brute ſpecies, at leaſt in very many inſtances, will not breed in confinement. By the inſtinct of nature they diſdain, as it were, to become the parents of ſlaves and of wretches. And ſhall man, in this reſpect, be imagined inferior to the creatures, over whom the God of creation has given him commandment? I love to cheriſh every exalting idea of my own ſpecies; I admire the ſulky inſenſibility of the wretch, confined within the walls of a Hundred-houſe, to all the incitements of deſire. I enter fully into his pride, when he will not obey the command, which the policy of nations is ever deſirous of ſeeing generally complied

plied with. But be it that this is all declamation; be it that there is no moral cauſe thus operating to the prevention of population within theſe eſtabliſhments; there are phyſical cauſes enough which will abundantly vindicate the largeſt aſſertions, that any man, who has at all conſidered the matter, may chuſe to make upon this head.

It is impoſſible, but that the air of thoſe places ſhould be injured, in which numbers are obliged to ſubſiſt together, even admitting there is the niceſt attention to cleanlineſs and ventilation; and that conſequently, it ſhould be detrimental to the health of the infantine part of the inhabitants, if not to that of thoſe of a more advanced age. But this is not the worſt evil that, in this reſpect, attends upon places of this nature. The ſituation of perſons in any ſpecies of confinement is truly deplorable, whenever a contagious diſorder, a circumſtance by no means unfrequent, is introduced amongſt them; for nothing can be more obvious, than that its ſpread muſt of courſe be infinitely more

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rapid among a given number of perſons, condenſed into a ſmall ſpace, and conſequently more liable to frequent contact, than in the ſame number diffuſed more widely, by being in ſeparate dwellings. Indeed, to obtain the moſt irrefragrable evidence in this reſpect, one has nothing to do but to appeal to plain matter of fact. Let the patrons and encouragers of this ſpecies of eſtabliſhments, produce the regiſters of the burials from even the beſt conſtructed, beſt managed, and beſt ſituated of thoſe houſes, and I will be bold to ſay, that the mortality, which will thereby be witneſſed as taking place, will be perfectly unaccountable for, upon any idea, but upon that of there being ſomething peculiarly deſtructive to exiſtence in the very nature of theſe eſtabliſhments. I have ventured to make this aſſertion, even with reſpect to houſes of induſtry, which are founded in the country, and placed in the moſt wholeſome ſpot in the whole province in which they are erected. If then we take into conſideration, likewiſe, thoſe houſes of this nature which are eſtabliſhed

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in the various great towns and cities of this iſland, the comparative account would be ſhocking indeed, would be ſuch as deeply to affect every man of humanity with the moſt lively emotions, and every lover of his country, and every friend of Society, with the moſt ſerious regret! In the Work-houſe at Norwich, a city that ranks very high amongſt thoſe which are remarkable for their ſalubrity, there is ſcarcely one in twenty of the children born within its walls, that ſtretches its exiſtence beyond infancy. And in the ſummer of the year 1772, the above city was ſo ſingularly healthy, that the number of deaths, for ſeveral weeks, was much lower than had been remembered ſince the keeping of bills of mortality; inſomuch, that for ſeveral ſucceſſive weeks, there appeared to be no deaths from diſeaſe, all being either from accident or extreme old age, *except in the Work-houſes*. Surely, a ſufficiently ſatisfactory proof this of the point I am endeavouring to eſtabliſh.

But, whilſt theſe inſtitutions thus tend to the deſtruction of life, they are the very

means of encreaſing the numbers of thoſe poor, whoſe extraordinary mortality they thus notoriouſly occaſion. There muſt be hewers of wood, and drawers of water; but it is the neceſſitous alone who will undertake offices of this nature. There are certain ſituations in Society, into which none will introduce themſelves but the moſt extremely indigent. Be it then, that all of this claſs are removed from the different places where they were wont to reſide, interſperſed with the other claſſes of their fellow men, to the Hundred-houſe, there muſt evidently be a deficiency in the pariſhes of that hundred, moſt remote from this houſe, of perſons to perform the duties, which men only of their deſcription can be induced to perform. The obvious conſequence then is, not that upon any exigence of this nature thoſe who are in want of the above claſs, will ſend ten or twenty miles perhaps to the Houſe of Induſtry, to get thoſe wants ſupplied, but that they will have recourſe to the pariſhes, that border upon the ſituation in which they are placed, where no Hundred Houſes

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are eſtabliſhed, whoſe poor will always be ready to croud in to ſupply the partial deficiencies that prevail with reſpect to them. Thus the hiring as it were of foreign poor will, in theſe hundreds, become common; ſettlements will hereby be gained in them; whole families will be entailed upon the inhabitants; and, in ſhort, the number of the poor will, without the leaſt contradiction, be eventually encreaſed in every place whereſoever a Houſe of Induſtry exiſts. But it is not merely on account of the inconvenience which perſons placed at a diſtance from the Hundred Houſe are neceſſarily put to, in ſending to hire labourers out of it, that they do what I have aſſerted is their practice; but there is another, and perhaps a ſtill more urgent reaſon, why they purſue the conduct above mentioned. It is an undoubted fact that the poor, who have lived for ſome time in houſes of Induſtry, and more eſpecially the younger part of them, who have been brought up in thoſe houſes, are by no means ſo able to perform common country labour, as thoſe which have been educated with their pa-

rents in cottages. Accuſtomed to the hot atmoſphere of work-houſes, and kept the greateſt part of their time within doors, they cannot bear the common changes of the weather, but ſhrink ſo much from the winter's cold, that they are abſolutely unable to pull turnips, and do many other neceſſary rural works, which require their being the greateſt part of the day in the open air. The coarſe food and hard lodging of the farmers ſervants, are to them likewiſe objects of complaint; the former not being equally delicate with that to which they have been accuſtomed in their houſes of induſtry; and the latter being of courſe much colder than that to which they have been uſed in theſe confined and crouded habitations. The conſequence of theſe and other ſimilar circumſtances is, that the farmers almoſt univerſally refuſe, or very reluctantly take into their ſervice boys, or young men, who have long lived in any Houſe of Induſtry; engaging on the contrary, whenever they can, the poor of other Hundreds, whom no eſtabliſhments of this nature have as yet ruined or debili-

bilitated*. But this, it muſt be granted, is but a partial evil; is but an evil brought upon thoſe Hundreds, where theſe kinds of eſtabliſhments have taken place, and which at the ſame time certainly proportionably benefits thoſe parts of a county whence the above mentioned ſupply of poor is derived. Were then this the only light in which we could ſet the effect of theſe eſtabliſhments in encreaſing the number of the poor, it would only be conſi-

* It might have been added here, that boys brought up in Houſes of Induſtry are remarkably ſhiftleſs. Having had every article of food and cloathing conſtantly provided for them in theſe Houſes, they have never acquired that kind of management, which other boys exerciſe at an early period. For having no property, and, ſtrictly ſpeaking, no wants, they ſcarcely know what it is to make a bargain, or how to buy the common neceſſaries. Whereas, boys who have been brought up more at large in cottages, as ſoon as they are able to earn any thing, become poſſeſſed of ſomething like property, and their minds are immediately exerciſed in thinking how they ſhall beſt apply it in procuring cloathing, &c. The greater poverty, which it perhaps muſt be allowed, exiſts in the cottages, than in thoſe Houſes, operates poſſibly to quicken the induſtry of young people, as they ſoon find that they muſt depend for a ſubſiſtence on their own perſonal labour and good management.

dered as a local objection, which the inhabitants of the Hundred, where Houſes of Induſtry have been erected, might with juſtice make, and which, if this ſpecies of houſes were univerſal, would be perfectly removed. But, certain it is, that this is not the only light in which the ſubject may be viewed. There are many other cauſes in theſe eſtabliſhments operating to the increaſe of the poor, which do not depend upon merely local circumſtances. It has frequently been ſtrongly urged againſt the uſe of thoſe machines, by which labour is ſaved, that they tend to the injury and hurt of the poor, depriving numbers of thoſe means of ſubſiſtence, which without theſe inventions they would have in their poſſeſſion, by cauſing work to be ſcarce, or by reducing the price of it ſo low, as to render it impoſſible for any poor man to maintain himſelf or his family, by the utmoſt effects of his induſtry. And doubtleſs in a variety of inſtances, this objection is valid; indeed, in every inſtance, where a manufacture has arrived at its height, and where the conſumption of

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it is rather declining, than encreaſing. It may then with ſtill more propriety and juſtice be objected in the preſent caſe, that as the obvious and neceſſary effect of Houſes of Induſtry is the diminution of the price of labour; as perſons may be hired out of thoſe houſes to perform certain works at a cheaper rate, than thoſe who are not inhabitants of them can afford to undertake them for; and as in conſequence of this, the earnings of many of the poorer claſſes muſt neceſſarily be diminiſhed, that the very means, which are made uſe of for the ſuppoſed benefit of the country, are in fact and in truth the ſource of its encreaſing poverty and wretchedneſs. But this is not all. It is very well known, that there are many pariſhes in theſe kingdoms, of the landed property of which two or three large farmers are the chief poſſeſſors. Where this happens to be the caſe in any pariſh not in an incorporated hundred, it is obviouſly the intereſt of theſe farmers to keep the poor, who are reſident in their pariſh, as much employed as poſſible, in order to prevent them from becoming

becoming chargeable to the pariſh, to the poors rates, of which they are obliged to pay the principal ſhares. But how different is the caſe in an incorporated hundred, in which a Houſe of Induſtry is erected? Here theſe Farmers have no dread of the conſequence of the poor's being out of employ; they are well aware they ſhall ſuffer nothing by it; the Hundred Houſe will maintain them without any additional burden upon them. The effect of this is, that theſe farmers inſiſt upon having their work done for a certain price. The poor man cannot remonſtrate with them. "It "is impoſſible for me to maintain myſelf "and my family at that price." The anſwer is, "Then there is the Houſe of In-"duſtry for you." He cannot threaten, as before he was wont to do: "then I'll "throw myſelf upon the pariſh;" for the Hundred Houſe has relieved each opulent farmer from the perſonal burden, to which an inattention to the intereſt of the poor was wont to render him liable. And thus it is, that whilſt thoſe who were juſt able to exiſt upon their poor pittance, are tranſ-

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ported to the Houſe of Induſtry, and are become poor indeed; thoſe, who, before theſe houſes were erected in their Hundred, were able to earn a comfortable maintenance for themſelves and their families, are reduced to the extremeſt difficulty, and in a very ſhort time will be obliged to betake themſelves to the habitation, whither their once poorer brethren, have but juſt preceded them. But again: It is a fact within the recollection of every one, that prior to the erection of a Houſe of Induſtry in any Hundred, the different villages in that Hundred had all of them a variety of ſmall tradeſmen, who maintained themſelves and their families by diſpoſing of their wares, which were of the coarſeſt and cheapeſt ſort, to the poor people who lived around them. At each entrance into one of theſe villages, a little taylor or ſhoe-maker, &c. might be obſerved labouring in their vocations. But now the caſe is entirely changed. This claſs of our fellow-ſubjects in every incorporated Hundred, is become almoſt wholly extinguiſhed. The Hundred

Houſe

Houſe has ſwallowed up all their poor cuſtomers, ſo that they themſelves are either neceſſitated to go into the Hundred Houſe likewiſe, or to betake themſelves to ſome other diſtrict in ſearch of employment. But indeed I might have ſpared myſelf the trouble of noticing the alternative; for the former is in moſt inſtances unavoidably their lot. By the eighth and ninth of William III. effect was given to the invention of certificates, (the general nature of which is too well known to every one to need explaining) ſince which time, not a term has paſſed but Weſtminſter-hall has rung with ſome ſtory diſgraceful to humanity, or repugnant to a ſenſe of equity, which has hence been occaſioned. For though a certificate carries along with it no teſtimonial of good behaviour, and certifies nothing, but that the perſon belongs to the pariſh, to which he really does belong; it is altogether diſcretionary in the pariſh-officers, either to grant or to refuſe it. But this diſcretionary power is in no caſe capable of being employed to a worſe effect, than in a province, where one of

theſe Hundred Houſes is erected. Let the recital of a plain matter of fact, bear teſtimony to this point.

The poor-rates, in a large and populous city of this kingdom, becoming enormous, an enquiry was directed to be made by the guardians of the poor into the number of perſons reſident in the city, who were aliens, and likely to become burdenſome to the inhabitants. In conſequence of this, a ſcene commenced not unlike that which is occaſioned by the iſſuing of a preſs warrant in a ſea-port at the firſt breaking out of a war; men and women were diſlodged from habitations, where they had long lived in quiet oblivion, and where it is probable they would have ended their days without ever once being indebted, either for themſelves or their families, to any other ſource than to their own induſtry. But to give this circumſtance its full force, let us view it as it actually exiſted in a particular caſe. A man, by trade a glover, had been journeyman to one maſter more than twenty years, earning every week of

his life fifteen ſhillings and upwards. Upon the coming out of what I call the preſs warrants above referred to, this poor man was ordered by the officers appointed to manage the buſineſs, either to quit the town or to give ſecurity againſt his ever becoming chargeable to it. The man had lived ſo long in the place, that he had for years thought himſelf like the reſt of its inhabitants, the idea of his ever being noticed as one of its common paupers having never once entered his mind; and which, therefore, when firſt ſuggeſted to him, more excited his ſurprize than filled him with any alarm. Indeed he hardly could perſuade himſelf that the officers were ſerious in their application to him. When however he found that they were; anxious to get himſelf excuſed from applying to his pariſh for what his honeſt pride made him conſider as ſomewhat diſgraceful, and for what he was fully conſcious, or at leaſt confidently truſted, was quite idle and unneceſſary, he prayed the officers to paſs him by, ſhewing them fully

fully his ſituation, and the little fear there was that he ſhould ever want pariſh-aſſiſtance. It was however all to no purpoſe; the anſwer he received was, you muſt either go or get a certificate. Accordingly he ſet off for the place of his nativity, which was at a conſiderable diſtance, and which he had ſcarcely ever viſited ſince he was a boy, not doubting but that he ſhould ſoon return with the neceſſary requiſite, and ſpend the remainder of his days in peace and quiet in his favourite ſpot. But judge of his feelings; when he came to his pariſh it was one of an incorporated hundred, which he was informed never granted any certificates, and that therefore he muſt return to his ſettlement. The poor man remonſtrated, that if he came to his own pariſh, and left the place where he now reſided, he muſt ſtarve, for he could not find employment; that he was a glover. "A glover!" cried one of the acting managers for the Hundred Houſe; "oh then you muſt come into the houſe, we are in great want of one of your trade." And

thus was this induſtrious, this reſpectable member of ſociety, degraded from the ſtate of a freeman to that of a ſlave; reduced to a level with the loweſt of his fellow men; obliged not only to become an aſſociate with the idle and the diſſolute, but to ſpend that ingenuity and that diligence by which he had ſo worthily maintained himſelf, in contributing for the remainder of his days to make up thoſe deficiencies in the revenues of a houſe, which the ſupporting of perſons in it of a quite different character neceſſarily occaſions. Had the intelligent author of the hiſtory of the poor laws conſidered certificates as relative to theſe incorporated hundreds, inſtead of pariſhes, I am ſure that in his ſtrictures upon their effects, he would have made uſe of much ſtronger language, than the coolly remarking as he does, " that there is ſomewhat of hardſhip in this mater of certificate." I am ſure he would have execrated that invention of law, that gives irreſiſtible efficacy to tyranny, and which at the ſame time that it aids oppreſſion, of neceſſity increaſes

creaſes the number of the objects of that oppreſſion. But to proceed;

The conſequence of theſe eſtabliſhments of Houſes of Induſtry are ſo notorious, and their effects ſo rapidly powerful, that there cannot be a doubt, but that, in a very little while, the very face of ſociety in theſe kingdoms will be totally changed. Time was, when any thing like a badge of poverty was conſidered as a diſgrace; when the poor's being obliged to bear about with them any thing to characteriſe them from the reſt of their fellow men, was almoſt enough to rouſe them to a riot. But what is the caſe now? Where are the remains of this once, I will call it, honeſt pride? There is not a ſpark of it left. Each poor wretch now contentedly permits himſelf to be marked; he joins his claſs without a murmur, puts on his diſtinguiſhing habit, and appears to expreſs no one ſymptom of ſhame or regret; like the Helots of old in Sparta, or like the boors and peaſants of modern days in Ruſſia, they are not hurt to be regarded as

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of a quite different ſpecies from the reſt of the ſubjects of theſe realms. I have no ſcruple in aſſerting, that it will not be long before we ſhall ſee wretches in theſe kingdoms, who will bear to be beaten, nay, who muſt be beaten before they can be rouſed to exertion, like the ſlaves in Moldavia, whom the Baron De Tot deſcribes. Indeed, what can be expected from men whoſe habitation is a priſon? nay, whoſe place of nativity, as is the caſe with numbers, is a priſon? Is it poſſible that any thing like a principle of liberty ſhould be to be noticed in ſuch men? Can they ever be ſuppoſed capable of feeling the animation of the free heart? No! the very characteriſtic feature of a Briton muſt in them be defaced, and every impreſſion denotive of the ſoil from which they ſprang entirely obliterated. Nor is the ſole conſequence of theſe eſtabliſhments confined merely to the effects which they produce upon the poor themſelves; we, who are not of the claſs, *Docilis pauperiem pati*, are, however, in very great danger of having our

love, our *native* love (an expreſſion, which as an Engliſhman, I may ſurely be permitted to uſe) of liberty conſiderably cooled, and checked by being thus obliged to ſee a ſpecies of ſlavery ſo rife, and ſo common in our land. It has been objected, in the true ſpirit of our conſtitution, to the employing the convicts chained upon the public roads, a thing very common in moſt other countries in Europe; "that ſuch a practice would tend to render the idea of ſlavery tolerable to our countrymen, and hurt that untamed ſpirit of a Briton, which is his glory and his ſafeguard." And ſhall it not, may it not with equal juſtice be objected to the eſtabliſhment of Houſes of Induſtry, that their tendency in this reſpect is equal, nay greater? For in the former caſe the ſlavery is a puniſhment, and is the effect of the laws of that country in which it exiſts; but in the latter, it is of quite a different nature; it is a voluntary creation of our own, and it is frequently ſo far from being a puniſhment, that to men in whom

whom the ſpirit of liberty is extinguiſhed, and who do not love liberty for itſelf alone, it is quite the reverſe: it is an object of abject choice.

And as theſe eſtabliſhments thus irrefragably tend to deſtroy the ſpirit of liberty in theſe kingdoms, their effects are not leſs notorious with reſpect to the extinguiſhment of the ſpirit of patriotiſm; a matter this of the moſt alarming conſequence. The great ſtrength of every ſtate or community is, undoubtedly, the lower orders of its people. The higher orders of men are, certainly, but as the ornaments and decorations of a building; the lower are the ſtuds, and the beams, and the buttreſſes. Of the latter, then, of theſe two claſſes, certain it is, that the abſolutely poor, and thoſe that may eventually be poor, form a very great part *. Be it then, that the love of their country is annihilated, by any means whatever, in the breaſts of theſe men, the at-

* In the year 1772, during a hard winter, a contribution was ſet on foot in the city of Norwich for the relief of the poor, of which upwards of 22,000 perſons partook. The whole number of the inhabitants of the above city ſcarcely exceeds 40,000.

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tempts of the rich, or the higher orders of a kingdom, to ſave and protect it, whenever it is endangered, will be entirely vain and inefficacious. See, then, the extremity to which, by the general eſtabliſhment of theſe Houſes of Induſtry, we are about to be driven. It is impoſſible that thoſe who are cooped up in places of this nature, can have any affection for their country, or be at all concerned for its intereſt and proſperity. Of what moment can it poſſibly be to a wretch, who has not the liberty of walking out beyond a certain boundary, that the kingdom is not threatened by a foreign enemy, or that it is not torn by inteſtine commotions? Nay, is it not more likely that he ſhould rejoice at ſeeing the nation in perfect confuſion, ſince, in that caſe, he might entertain a hope, that, in a general wreck and pillage, in which it was impoſſible for him to ſuſtain a loſs, he might ſeize upon ſomething by which he might benefit himſelf? It is a well-known fact, that the poor in this country are not like the poor in France, who feel an enthuſiaſm for their Grand

Monarque; who, though more wretched than Job, when he was ſcratching himſelf with potſherds, ſtill think themſelves happy if they can but die for the honour of their King. A poor Engliſhman will fight, *pro aris & focis*, for the ſolid and ſubſtantial benefits he enjoys from the Government under which he lives; but as for all thoſe idle, ideal, fanciful incitements to proweſs, which in ſome other countries are known to exiſt, he is a perfect ſtranger to their influence. It is then ridiculous to expect from thoſe ſubjects of this kingdom who are *actually* confined, probably for life, in a Hundred houſe, or from thoſe who look forward, with almoſt a certainty, that they muſt from age, if not from accident or want of employment, ſoon be in a ſimilar predicament; it is, I ſay, perfectly ridiculous to expect, that any inhabitants of theſe kingdoms, circumſtanced as above, ſhould be willing to riſk their lives for the nation's defence, or be ready to ſtand forth on any emergency for its ſupport. It is much more natural to expect, or rather much more natural to fear, that,

that, inſtead of this they may, when their numbers are ſtill more encreaſed, a circumſtance daily taking place, involve this country in a calamity, in which a once full as mighty an empire was, from a not unſimilar quarter, involved, a *bellum ſervile*. But it is not merely from theſe eſtabliſhments being thus deſtructive of public principles, that they are hurtful to the general welfare and ſecurity of theſe kingdoms: there are particulars in the very nature of theſe eſtabliſhments themſelves, which neceſſarily involve in them a detriment to the political intereſts of our country. It is moſt undoubtedly to be admitted as an axiom, that by whatever means any particular number of perſons are made to earn leſs, in one ſituation, by an application to any given employment, than they would do in another, that the community thereby ſuſtains a loſs. That this, then, is the caſe with reſpect to perſons confined to labour in Houſes of Induſtry, I have indiſputable documents to verify. If we refer to certain authentic printed accounts, *of the General State of Receipts and Diſburſements of*

the Court of Guardians for the Poor, in the City of Norwich, for the year 1785-6, we ſhall find, that, from April 1, 1785, to April 1, 1786, ſixteen hundred paupers, being the average number of perſons in the two Houſes of Induſtry that year, did not earn more than 1425 l. 12 s. which is but 17 s. 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per head per annum, or 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per head per week, or not quite $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per day, excluding the Sunday. But it may perhaps be urged, that many of the poor in theſe houſes were infants, many old, and many ſick: but take off half the number for theſe ſeveral reaſons, and ſtill the earnings will not be one penny halfpenny per head per day. To what a ſet of almoſt uſeleſs beings is, then, a great part of the inhabitants of theſe kingdoms wretchedly reduced? But this is not the only way by which the political intereſts of this country are injured by theſe eſtabliſhments. The preſent ſtate of our repreſentation, the great decreaſe of the number of perſons who are concerned in the forming our Houſe of Commons, is an evil which is every day complained of, by every man who

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in the leaſt turns his thoughts to the ſubject. Whatever, then, has an obvious and undeniable tendency to promote and further this evil, is doubtleſs an object of juſt alarm to every man who is capable of feeling for the intereſts of the community, and of apprehending where they are materially endangered. That the eſtabliſhment, then, of Houſes of Induſtry has this tendency, will be plain upon the moſt ſummary ſtatement. It is, I believe, a part of our ſtatute law, that no perſon living in an almshouſe ſhall vote at any election of a member to ſerve in Parliament. I am well aware, that though this be law, yet that perſons of this deſcription are, notwithſtanding, in a variety of inſtances, indulged in the exerciſe of this franchiſe. Be it then that this indulgence was univerſal, does it follow, that the votes of theſe perſons are, what all votes ought to be, free votes? By no means: for if perſons of the above deſcription are permitted to give their ſuffrages, their ſuffrages are always given under the influence either of the maſters or the managers of the houſes in

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which they are confined. The concluſion, then, hence is obvious; that, in either caſe, an injury is done to the repreſentation of theſe kingdoms. For if every poor man, the moment he enters one of theſe houſes, loſes his franchiſe, there is nothing can be plainer, than that the eſtabliſhment of every Houſe of Induſtry robs the country of the benefit of a number of voices. But, if this be not the caſe, yet if the poor in theſe Houſes are, as they moſt undoubtedly are, perfectly under the controul of one or more individuals, who have the ſuperintending of theſe habitations, the ſame, nay worſe conſequences, muſt moſt obviouſly enſue. For, in the former caſe, there is an actual deſtruction of voters; in the latter, which is far more injurious to the intereſts of liberty, there is a centring of a number of votes into one hand. Hence it is notorious, throughout different parts of theſe kingdoms, that many a petty Eſquire, many a Clergyman, more fond of worldly than ſpiritual influence, many an Alderman of a Corporation, acquire to themſelves an intereſt of more

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conſequence in a conteſted election, than many a man of the moſt conſiderable eſtate, being frequently enabled, out of the walls of their Houſes of Induſtry, to carry more freemen to the polling booth than the richeſt individual in a whole city or borough. It is from this cauſe, perhaps, more than any other, that there is ſuch ſtriving amongſt perſons of a certain deſcription to get the ſuperintendency of one of theſe eſtabliſhments. The moment any man gains this, he is a man of conſequence and of power: Correſpondents in diſtant counties write to him for copies of orders and regulations; and he diſpenſes his *ſaving* knowledge to the further ſides of the iſland. At home, and in his own neighbourhood, the number of poor in the Houſes being as we ſaid above, his abſolute vaſſals, and the opportunity which his ſituation affords him of appointing the baker, the butcher, nay, the ſurgeon and the chaplain, &c. gives him a degree of importance, and puts into his hands a degree of influence, which a perſon in his condition and circumſtances ought not to be intruſted with. But, to

return to a more general conſideration of the ſubject. Certain it is, that none of our faculties are even retainable without culture and exerciſe. Man would become a ſtupid, inſenſible brute, if he had no objects by which to call forth his ſympathy, nor any ſubject for the employment of his feelings. Thus, therefore, if there were no miſeries in life, we ſhould not only not have any occaſion for compaſſion, but the very feeling itſelf would become a perfect ſtranger to our boſoms. It follows then, that in proportion as we put it out of our power to exerciſe this feeling, by any means, except by its actual exertion in the actual relief of wretchedneſs, we endanger the loſs of the feeling itſelf. And how then ſtands the caſe with regard to the operation of theſe Houſes of Induſtry in this reſpect? Is it not a notorious fact, that, in every diſtrict where one of theſe Houſes is erected, no man ever thinks of giving way to a benevolent impulſe? Is it not well known to be the conſtant reply of every inhabitant of an incorporated Hundred to the addreſs of the wretched, "Why don't

"you

" you go to the Houſe? In ſhort, it may with truth be declared of almoſt every individual ſituated as above mentioned, that they paſs days, and months, and years, without ever once yielding to the genuine yearnings of humanity; without ever once cheering a poor pitileſs wretch with an accidental ſhilling, extorted by the unſophiſticated workings of pure nature. The conſequence is inferentially obvious. But we need not content ourſelves with this: for, if we appeal to fact, we ſhall certainly find, that, in thoſe countries where the poor are maintained by a regard to duty, as in Holland, where, " pray remember the poor," is the conſtant concluding ſentence of the preacher's diſcourſe; or, by an application to humanity, as in Ireland, where few or none of our burdenſome eſtabliſhments are as yet founded, there is infinitely more of a benevolent principle to be met with than in thoſe ſtates where the poor are alone under the protection of the law; where, by numerous ſtatutes, their ſubſiſtence is forced, perhaps, from the indigent and neceſſitous themſelves, and where the great bur-

den does not lay where it ought always to lay, upon the rich, but upon the middling, or even the ſtill lower ranks of a community.

But what makes the eſtabliſhment of theſe Houſes of Induſtry a ſtill more ſerious evil is, that at the very time that they thus tend to the deſtruction of the benevolent principle of the rich and the opulent, they tend, likewiſe, to the deſtruction of the moral principles of the very poor, for whoſe expreſs benefit they are pretended to be erected. Every thing that has ever been alledged in proof of thoſe places, where numbers of perſons are obliged to an intimate aſſociation, ſuch as camps, &c. being nurſeries of vice, will hold particularly ſtrong with reſpect to Houſes of Induſtry. But here is a variety of ſources, whence wickedneſs is naturally generated, that are peculiar to this ſpecies of eſtabliſhment. It may be truly ſaid of the inhabitants of one of theſe houſes that they are, for the moſt part, a "Peſtilential congregation." The verieſt refuſe of the world is here to be met with, living

living and abiding with thoſe, whoſe tender years render them incapable of ſeeking a proviſion for themſelves, and with thoſe whom age, infirmity or the low price of labour, have driven to this reſort. What then can be expected from ſuch an aſſemblage as this, but in due courſe of time, a general depravity? It is impoſſible that the young ſhould not learn, if this be not the caſe with thoſe who are more advanced in life, many of the vitious habits of thoſe numerous abandoned wretches, with whom they are thus neceſſitated ſo cloſely to aſſociate. It cannot be, but that there ſhould be many an incitement to low deſires, and many an opportunity of gratifying thoſe deſires, when perſons of both ſexes are ſo promiſcuouſly lodged, as they are in many of the workh uſes in theſe kingdoms. I am well aware, that it will here be replied, that every poſſible care is taken to prevent the miſchievous effects I am here deſcribing; that in the ſeveral Houſes of Induſtry of a late eſtabliſhment, the management is in general ſo good, and the attention of their patrons ſo great, that theſe effects do

not exiſt any where, ſave in a prejudiced imagination. Were I diſpoſed to pay the fulleſt credit to what is thus confidently alledged upon this point, (which by the bye, I am very far from doing) I ſhould, notwithſtanding, hold in remembrance the import of the old proverb, "*New brooms ſweep clean*;" and I feel myſelf perfectly juſtified in making this alluſion, by a reference to what I know has actually taken place in the workhouſes in the city of Norwich. There is little or no doubt, but that the houſes to which I have now called an attention, were upon their firſt being dedicated to the purpoſes for which they are now employed, (one of them having been the palace of a duke) as well calculated to anſwer the deſired ends, and as well regulated (both of them, ever ſince they were made the receptacle of poverty, having been under the controul and ſuperintendance of *Sixty Guardians*) as any houſes that have been erected for the like intents, within the reign of his preſent majeſty. And what then is the ſituation of affairs now within theſe houſes?

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In what ſtate of ſecurity are the morals of the poor, within the walls of theſe habitations? I verily believe, I ſhould be warranted in aſſerting, that there is not a vice, that is not there, not only practiſed but promoted. Till the late exertions of a moſt active, zealous, and benevolent man, there were evils exiſting in theſe old eſtabliſhed Houſes of Induſtry, that were no leſs injurious to the morals of the poor, than they are ſhocking to decency to relate. It is a fact, which cannot with any truth be denied, that in ſeveral inſtances there were three or four perſons of different ſexes, who lodged together under the ſame blanket, and that even now, in the ſame room, may be ſeen men, women, and children, unreſervedly aſſociating together, totally devoid of every thing like relative delicacy. The conſequences of an aſſemblage of this nature, muſt be too obvious to every man to need pointing out. And what ſecurity then, I would aſk, can the patrons and ſupporters of the rage for erecting Houſes of Induſtry, give the publick, that the like evils will not, at ſome

future period, become prevalent in thoſe manſions of this deſcription, which are now founded, or which are now founding under their auſpices? It is utterly impoſſible, in the very nature of things, that they ſhould be able to offer any. What advantage then is it, that theſe perſons promiſe to themſelves, or to the country at large, by their zealous promotions of theſe erections? The truth is in ſhort this: They are deceived by the effect, which it muſt be owned, theſe eſtabliſhments do at firſt produce, the *temporary* diminution of the poor's rates; I ſay *temporary*, becauſe I am well convinced, that in the courſe of time, this effect will ceaſe; and that inſtead of a diminution, they will eventually occaſion a moſt grievous encreaſe. In proof of what I have here advanced, I need but appeal to what has been the caſe, in theſe workhouſes in Norwich, to which I have already had a reference, and which on account of the reformation, which by the unuſal diligence and perſeverance of the perſon, who undertook the unthankful office of correction, has been lately effected, exhibits

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one of the moſt ſtriking examples in this reſpect that could poſſibly have been wiſhed for. I will beg leave to ſtate before you two accounts, (taken by the clerk himſelf of the Court of Guardians, from the weekly account book) from each of the workhouſes, containing the expence of a week's proviſion for each workhouſe in September 1783, prior to the reform; and the expence of a week's proviſion for the ſame workhouſe in September 1787, after the reform had taken place, and had been matured by a three years practice.

A Week's

A Week's expences for Proviſions in the New Workhouſe, in Norwich, September 21, 1783.

		£.	s.	d.
71	Stones, 6 lbs. meat, at 4s. - -	14	5	9
80	Stones of flour, at 2s.	8	0	0
1120	Brown loaves, at 6¾d.	31	2	6
140	White loaves, at 6¾d.	3	18	9
23	Stone of cheeſe, at 5s. ¾d.	5	16	5¾
80	Pints of butter, at 8d.	2	13	4
308	Pints of milk, at ¾d.	0	19	3
8	Pecks of oatmeal, at 1s. 10d. - -	0	14	8
5½	Ditto of wheat, at 1s. 9d.	0	9	7½
4	Stones of ſalt, at 19½d.	0	6	6
7	Tubs of lees, at 9d.	0	5	3
16	lbs. of brown ſoap, at 6½d. - -	0	8	8
6	Ditto white, at 7d.	0	3	6
6	Ditto candles -	0	3	4
18	Barrels of beer, at 6s. 6d.	5	17	0
	Grocery - -	1	11	3
		76	5	9¾

649 Perſons in the Houſe.

A Week's

A Week's expence for Proviſions in the New Workhouſe, Norwich, September 22, 1787.

		£.	s.	d.
6	Stones of cheeks -	0	11	0
40	Ditto meat - -	7	17	11
30	Stones of flour, at 34s. per ſack -	2	16	1
69	Stone, 7 lbs. dough	4	1	1
117	Score brown loaves, at 3s. 6d. - -	19	14	6
14	Score white loaves, at 3s. 4d. - -	2	6	8
78	lbs. of butter, at 9d.	2	18	6
3½	Firkins of butter, at 34s.	5	10	6
6	lbs. of ſoap, at 1s. 6d.	0	4	0½
18	lbs. of ſoap, at 8s. 6d. per ſt.	0	11	0
8	lbs. of candles, at 8d.	0	5	4
1¾	Peck of peas, at 2s. 4d.	0	4	1
6	Pecks of wheat, at 18¾d.	0	9	4½
10	Ditto oatmeal, at 18d.	0	15	0
6	Stone of ſait, at 18d.	0	7	6
7	Tubs of lees, at 9d. -	0	5	3
19	Barrels of beer, at 4s. 6d.	4	5	6
464	Pints of milk, at 1¼d. a quart - -	1	4	2
2½	Sacks of potatoes, at 4s.	0	9	0
	Grocery - -	1	9	0½
		56	6	1½

714 Perſons in the houſe.

A Week's expence for Proviſions in the Old Workhouſe, Norwich, September, 20, 1783.

		£.	s.	d.
62	Stones, 7 lbs. of meat, at 4s. - -	12	10	6½
60	Stones of flower, at 2s.	6	0	0
780	Brown loaves, 6¾d.	21	18	9
140	White loaves, at 6¾d.	3	19	2
10	Stone of cheeſe, at 5s. 3½d.	4	16	2½
63	Pints of butter, at 8d.	2	2	0
378	Pints of milk, at ¾d.	1	3	6
5	Pecks of wheat, at 20d.	0	8	9
8	Pecks of oatmeal, at 18d.	0	12	0
4	Stones of ſalt, at 22d.	0	7	4
20	lbs. of ſoap, at 6¾d.	0	11	3
3	Tubs of lees, at 6d.	0	1	6
6	lbs. of candles, at 6¾d.	0	3	4½
15½	Barrels of beer, at 6s. 6d.	5	0	9
	Grocery - -	1	1	0½
		60	15	8

547 Perſons in the houſe.

A Week's

A Week's expence for Proviſions in the Old Workhouſe, Norwich, September 21, 1787.

		£.	s.	d.
6	Stones of ox cheeks -	0	11	0
20	Stones, 7 lbs. of meat, at 3s. 11d. -	4	0	1½
24	Stone of flour, at 34s. per ſack - -	2	2	6
56	Stone, 7 lbs. of dough, at 21d. for 21 pound	3	4	9
94	Score of brown loaves, at 3s. 6½d. - -	17	0	0
12	Ditto white ditto, at 3s. 4½d.	2	0	6
4½	Firkins of butter, at 34s.	7	4	6
3	Pints of ditto, at 8½d.	0	2	1½
5	Stones of cheeſe, at 2s.	0	10	0
384	Pints of milk, at 1½d. a quart - -	1	0	0
2	Pecks of peas, at 15d.	0	2	6
5¾	Pecks of wheat, at 18½d.	0	9	1½
20	Pecks of potatoes, at 5½d.	0	8	9
8	Pecks of oatmeal, at 1s. 4d.	0	12	6
4	Stone of ſalt, at 1s. 6d.	0	6	0
5¾	Stone of treacle, 3s. -	0	17	3
24	lbs. of ſoap, at 8½d. -	0	17	0½
4	Tubs of lees, at 1s. -	0	4	0
6	lbs. of candles, at 8½d.	0	4	3
16	Barrels of beer, at 4s. 6d.	3	12	0
	Grocery - -	0	5	8
		45	14	1

618 Perſons in the Houſe.

Upon the very face then of theſe accounts, and at the firſt bluſh, there does appear to have been an enormous waſte of the public money. But if we calculate what would have been the expence for proviſion, if bought and uſed as in September, 1783, for the number of perſons who were in the Houſes, in September, 1787, and which, as appears in the accounts, conſiderably exceeds the number in 1783, and then deduct what it really coſt in 1787, as it ſtands in the accounts, we ſhall find the ſaving upon that number of perſons, namely, 1332, to be about 2600l. per annum; but as 1332 is not the average number of perſons in the houſes, either this year, or for any of the years ſince the alteration took place, let us take the average number from May 1783, to May 1787, which as appears from the yearly printed accounts of the Court of Guardians, is 1480, and it will be obvious, calculating as before, that if the ſaving in 1332 perſons be 2600l. the ſaving in 1480, is exactly 2880l. and which, therefore, may be fairly ſtated as the clear annual

ſum,

ſum, which till the reform referred to, took place, was unneceſſarily and grievouſly levied upon the town, and profuſely ſquandered away by the managers of the work-houſes to no one beneficial purpoſe whatſoever. It will, doubtleſs, have occurred to every one that as the inſtance, which I have here adduced of the abuſes that prevailed in the above mentioned houſes, is confined ſolely to the article of food, that of courſe, I have given but a very inadequate idea of the whole of the extent of thoſe abuſes. There are, certainly, many other articles, upon which much larger ſums are expended than are requiſite for the properly carrying into execution the objects of theſe inſtitutions, and concerning which the queſtion may with great propriety be aſked, " Why was all this waſte made? it had better have been ſpared, and given to the poor." But what then is the obvious inference in this caſe? What concluſion does the incontrovertible fact, which I have been ſtating, teach us to draw? Is it not this? " That whatever ſpecious appearances the eſtabliſhment of theſe Houſes

of

of Induſtry may at firſt hold out, of their tendency to the lowering of the rates at which pariſhes are aſſeſſed, or even, however, at any time afterwards, from the particular exertions of particular men, they may effectuate this end for a while, (which we ſee has been the caſe with the work-houſes in Norwich) yet that the natural tendency of theſe eſtabliſhments to abuſes is ſo great, and in the common courſe of things ſo almoſt unavoidable, that it may fairly be predicated concerning them in *general*, that they will all certainly, ultimately, occaſion an encreaſe of the burden impoſed upon the country, for the maintenance of the poor, inſtead of operating ſubſtantially and continuedly to lighten and diminiſh it.

But although I have taken up ſo much time upon this point, I am not very anxious reſpecting my having ſatisfactorily eſtabliſhed it. For granting that the founding theſe Houſes of Induſtry did univerſally and inconteſtibly tend to the diminution of the poor-rates in every hundred, or in every town or city in which they are erected, yet

yet ſtill I would aſk, is the ſaving a few hundreds, or a few thouſand pounds to a country, an object, for which the deſtruction of ſome of the beſt principles ought to be riſqued; for which the true national ſtrength and ſecurity ought to be bartered; for which, the health, population, morals and happineſs of the lower orders of our people ought to be ſacrificed?

Forbid it humanity—Forbid it ſound policy! Upon you then, ye ſons of Wiſdom and of Feeling, do I call, as my appeal is to the liberal and enlarged of the nation. Stand ye forward.---Be bold in your oppoſition to the intrigues of the narrow-hearted, and the ſelfiſh, who now are buſy in forming ſchemes for the pretended benefit of the poor, for the real benefit of themſelves. Watch their motions; minutely ſcrutinize their plans; be deaf to every *novel project*, which has nothing but the little object of ſaving in view, and ſet your Samſon arms to the pillars of thoſe priſon-houſes, which have already been erected for the poor, and the God of providence will ſave you from being over-

whelmed in their ruin. Prevent every ſeſſions of the Legiſlature from being diſgraced with repeated acts for the eſtabliſhment of what will certainly, in the end, not only be a national diſgrace, but a national deſtruction. Let it not be thrown in the teeth of the Engliſh of the preſent day, that whilſt a great part of our countrymen are overflowing with zeal to annihilate Negro ſlavery, and heſitate not to riſk, for the purpoſe, a convulſion in our plantations, that at home they are abſolutely eager and ſtrenuous in degrading their fellow countrymen to a worſe than Negro ſtate, in dooming them to dependence on many maſters, to hopeleſs labour in confinement, to hopeleſs want, to the ~~laws~~ of ſociety, which mutters whilſt it maintains them, to a herd without attachment, and to a goal without guilt.

THE END.